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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
23 May 1967

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Intelligence Attack On The
Viet Cong Infrastructure

I. The Targets

1. The Communist insurgency in South Vietnam is basically a triumph of organization. The Communists' efficient, flexible, tightly disciplined and--most important--locally-rooted organization has been carefully built up over a long period of time. Through an intricate network of provincial and district committees, the organization is held together and is able to maintain the insurgency's essential base at hamlet and village level. From this base, control is exerted over the rural population which provides both the local manpower and resources, without which, the insurgency would collapse. The success of the insurgency, therefore, depends directly on the performance, morale and effectiveness of the cadre who comprise the district and provincial level committees. These cadre are, at one time, the Communists greatest source of strength and their greatest area of vulnerability, for losses among this group by death, capture or defection constitute blows at the vitals of the entire movement. Obviously the Communist hierarchy is no less aware than we of both the value and the vulnerability of their cadre. Through their organizational skill and control of the population the Communists have been highly successful in enshrouding these cadre from our eyes. An attack aimed at this target group, to be effective, requires a reciprocal, painstaking organizational effort on our part. Stated simply, we require a) the collection of precise, timely intelligence on the targets, b) the ability to collate and process rapidly the exhaustive data that we do acquire and, c) the means to take prompt, direct action commensurate with the identified target.

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II. Collection

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3. Obviously these collection units overlap, but this is desirable since each contribution creates, in effect, a laminate of the VC organization, province by province. Their progress has been substantial. Our problem now, in fact, is not so much the acquisition of new data as the collation and exploitation of the information being obtained through present collection sources.

III. Collation

4. Considering the number of disparate collectors who contribute to the political order of battle which spreads throughout the 44 provinces and ranges from region to hamlet level, orderly collation of the data is a crucial link in its exploitation. The bulk of useful intelligence on the Viet Cong infrastructure is low-level and requires collation and exploitation at district or province level.

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9. The Communists take great pains to prevent their cadre from being exposed, through physical protection provided by their military arm and through their own intelligence resources, which give early warning of impending danger from the GVN. Only where we have sufficient and readily available strength to cope with the enemy's local military resources can we expect to exploit, as thoroughly as we would like, the extensive intelligence which is at hand.

10. The means available at district level for exploiting intelligence on the infrastructure vary considerably and are frequently inadequate. Most district chiefs have at their disposal no more than one mobile RF company and, perhaps, a platoon or two of PF troops, whose operations are not normally oriented against the infrastructure. Police resources in most districts are negligible. Provincial Reconnaissance Units normally operate under the control of provincial authorities. Generally speaking, only when American forces are available are the means--and impetus--provided for operations directed against the infrastructure by district authorities. In the absence of these resources, district authorities lack the will and the impetus to do much more than attempt to cope with the military operations of the Viet Cong, and even if they possessed accurate and timely intelligence on the infrastructure they would not be inclined to react to it effectively.

V. Conclusions

11. The increased awareness that Revolutionary Development progress was being sharply hindered by lack of security, has tended to make us consider the problem solely in terms of the security of the RD cadre teams, despite the fact that the extirpation of the VC cadre system is the sine qua non for pacification. The two thrusts must be considered in tandem. Our successes where Americans have dominated the collation of intelligence at province or district level, have occurred in areas where, because of American troop locations, we were militarily dominant over the VC. In Operation CEDAR FALLS, for example, MACV J-2 advisers [redacted]

[redacted] were able to provide the military and the police with the intelligence on which they

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were able to take action. However, action in this hard core VC area, was made possible by the aggressive presence of the US II field force. Under their protective screen, district-based planning and exploitation was highly productive. Few districts in Vietnam have less information on VC cadre and guerrillas and military displacements that was available in the CEDAR FALLS operation. But the reaction assets available to the average district chief are woefully inadequate.

12. With the reorientation of ARVN battalions into a role in support of RD cadre programs, we should be able to take advantage of this strength and plan our intelligence operations accordingly.

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[Redacted] This presupposes-- in the case of ARVN troops--that such forces will not merely be a screen; but, instead, will be employed in actively seeking out province and district main force units and destroying them. As the VC lose their protective elements, their cadre become exposed and, thus, vulnerable. The population, aware that retribution for cooperation with the GVN is not the all-prevasive threat that it was previously, become a greater source of intelligence and more of the arcane VC organization is surfaced.

13. For the very same reason that we cannot expect political progress, in depth, if the RD teams are working in an area where company strength VC reaction is an ever-present possibility, our exploitation of intelligence will continue to be no match for the rate at which it can be produced. Collection and collation techniques are constantly being improved and show every promise of continuing in this direction. Reaction capability is the bottleneck which will be broken only if we are successful in defining a new, broad pacification support posture for ARVN and in seeing that these necessary techniques are diligently practiced. The rate at which the redeployment of ARVN into the RD security role is progressing does not augur well for an appreciable step-up in the destruction of the VC infrastructure in the near future.

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14. The long-discussed concept of a National Constabulary is predicated on this real need for an aggressive, locally oriented force capable of coming to grips with the VC. Unfortunately, the National Constabulary idea is a long way from realization and cannot be considered as a force in being in this effort to increase the tempo of the attack.

15. In the final analysis, then, the problem becomes one of: (a) improving the effectiveness of existing mechanisms at province and higher levels for providing basic intelligence data to support operations at lower levels; and (b) developing an effective mechanism at district level where the means exist to exploit this basic intelligence as supplemented by locally available and timely information. The impetus for both of these must come from the U.S. side, in the first case through tightening up our own advisory procedures, and in the second case by taking the lead in establishing the mechanism built around the intelligence element of whatever U.S. combat forces are deployed in the district. We can press for similar mechanisms when Vietnamese Army units are employed within a district, but in the absence of a full-time U.S. intelligence ingredient as a catalyst (e.g., a battalion S-2 section) the performance will probably not be satisfactory. We can also seek to decentralize Provincial Reconnaissance Unit operations to some extent as a means of reinforcing the resources available to the district, but past experience has shown that if this were done without close U.S. supervision the effectiveness of such operations would be diluted; such a move would be productive only if the U.S. catalytic element were available at the district level.

16. A basic consideration to this problem--one which also affects other aspects of the pacification effort--is that available resources do not permit us to undertake an attack in all areas simultaneously. If properly concentrated, however, our resources are sufficient for us to focus on selected areas where the job can be done effectively. Success and experience thus gained would permit the reallocation of resources--or their duplication--to extend the attack to other areas.

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